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Chief, Presentation and Graphics Branch, ORE

17 January 1950

Chief, Operations Section, Presentation and
Graphics Branch, ORE

Problems of relationship between "CIA Situation Room" and other
unit installations

1. A comprehensive study covering the purpose, scope, and general exhibits and services of the CIA Situation Room was approved by the Office of the Assistant Director, ORE, and submitted, 17 November 1949, for perusal and recommendation by the Management Staff, CIA. This room has been established "primarily for the Director and the National Security Council, as well as those authorized members of CIA and the IAC agencies who require access to a facility providing an integrated national intelligence portrayal of selected aspects of the world-wide situation." Through the planned display of wall maps; other intelligence exhibits including charts, graphs, illustrations, headlines, and photographs; as well as supplementary projection, speech recording and amplifying facilities, there is being developed a facility that is both serviceable and professionally attractive.

2. Several recent developments have, by implication at least, served to cause some doubt as to the practicality and possible duplicity of the elements in the plan submitted. These are outlined as follows:

a. The increasing demands by ORE and other CIA units for consultation and technical assistance in the design and posting of intelligence displays and work maps, the normal housing of which should be considered for the central CIA room.

b. The numerous inquiries, based on misinformation, and at times, total ignorance, of the mission of the Situation Room. The most recent example directed from OPC.

c. The inability of the staff assigned, to operate and maintain the room under the direction of the Chief, Presentation and Graphics Branch through graphic support from the Graphics Section of the same unit, is an extreme handicap. This is due primarily to an inadequate T/O to handle all assigned commitments and still give priority to the exhibits for the room (35 projects of immediate need haven't even been started).

d. The apparent desirability on the part of many analysts and specialists to have access to the kind of exhibits and displays contemplated for the CIA Situation Room yet the physical separation of buildings and inadequate staff causes a condition

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where many professionals are engaged in drafting and design of maps and charts. Many devices are contemplated to alleviate this condition but it will take time to manufacture them for use. The status of the development of Situation plans submitted has been dependent on the recruitment of what will still be an inadequate staff of four persons, the establishment of realistic work priorities, and the continued cooperation of CIA offices to assure compliance to requests made for technical and substantive support. To date this has been very slow.

3. It is requested that in view of the foregoing, one or several of the following measures be considered:

a. A meeting of qualified representatives of the office of the Director, the Assistant Directors, Management Staff, and members of this staff unit, be held to ascertain the scope and direction of the CIA Situation Room and any comparable installations elsewhere.

b. A cost estimate be made of this apparent fragmentation of effort into separate Situation Rooms scattered through CIA buildings.

c. If each CIA producing office needs such a room for consultation and research, an economy of technical service and avoidance of duplicated effort might be effected if plans and working level liaison be coordinated with CIA-wide directives using the CIA room as the center of work and emphasis.

d. If this latter plan will not be feasible and the desire is to actually have a series of rooms set off from the use of any-one except individuals assigned to the designated offices for security reasons, the plan recommended would be as follows:

(1) Retain 117 Central and 119 Central for projection, speech recording, and presentations plus the retention of a small group of general displays (maps and headline boards) to reflect general world coverage of current CIA thinking in selected intelligence aspects.

(2) Free all except one or two persons to maintain the security and management of the room after displays are developed and posted, meanwhile having the present chief of the CIA room and his assistants serve in an advisory, coordinating, and technical capacity in gathering data for posting preparing the displays, and securing the services of appropriate CIA supporting units such as Graphics and Reproduction.

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(3) Have these smaller rooms based for convenience in two positions. In "M" or "Q" buildings to service ORE, O/O, OCD, and OSI units, possibly an enlargement of one being started by General Division; a second one based in "K" or "L" for use by OPC and OSC. Each room would show in detail those exhibits that would be in general in Room 117 except procedural matters interesting only the appropriate office.

4. To adopt the plans submitted to Management Staff on 17 November 1949 without looking into the problems outlined in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, is to invite duplication of effort and waste of thousands of dollars of costly equipment and construction. It is felt to be entirely within the realm of the maintenance of complete security, if enough of the long-range plans involving these various rooms be brought to the attention of ORE since the direction of its effort is a central service by order of the Director and should ideally be administered only by mutual consent of other Assistant Directors.

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